

The Magic Sash Episode 5: Harriet

This lesson plan accompanies Episode 5 of the podcast *The Magic Sash*, produced through a partnership of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, National Park Service, public media organization PRX, and Gen-Z Media.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

How do our life experiences shape our opinions and decisions? What actions do we take based on these experiences?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Students will identify and summarize the significance of Harriet Tubman in the history of abolition of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and her work as a women's rights and voting activist.
- 2 Students will compare and contrast the experiences of women of color supporting women's rights and suffrage with those of white women.
- 3 Students will create a design for a new U.S. \$20 bill featuring Harriet Tubman and explain their choices for imagery and text used in their designs.

MEET THE MAIN CHARACTER



Harriet Tubman, 1870s
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Harriet Tubman Harriet was the best-known conductor on the Underground Railroad. She also dedicated her life to other causes, like women's rights and suffrage, caring for the poor and aged, and supporting the Union in the U.S. Civil War.

IMPORTANT WORDS TO REMEMBER

Underground Railroad A system of cooperation among antislavery people in the United States before 1863 which helped enslaved people reach freedom in northern U.S. states or in Canada

Enslaved When a person has lost their freedom of choice or actions, when a person is a legally owned slave of another person.

LISTEN TO THE PODCAST

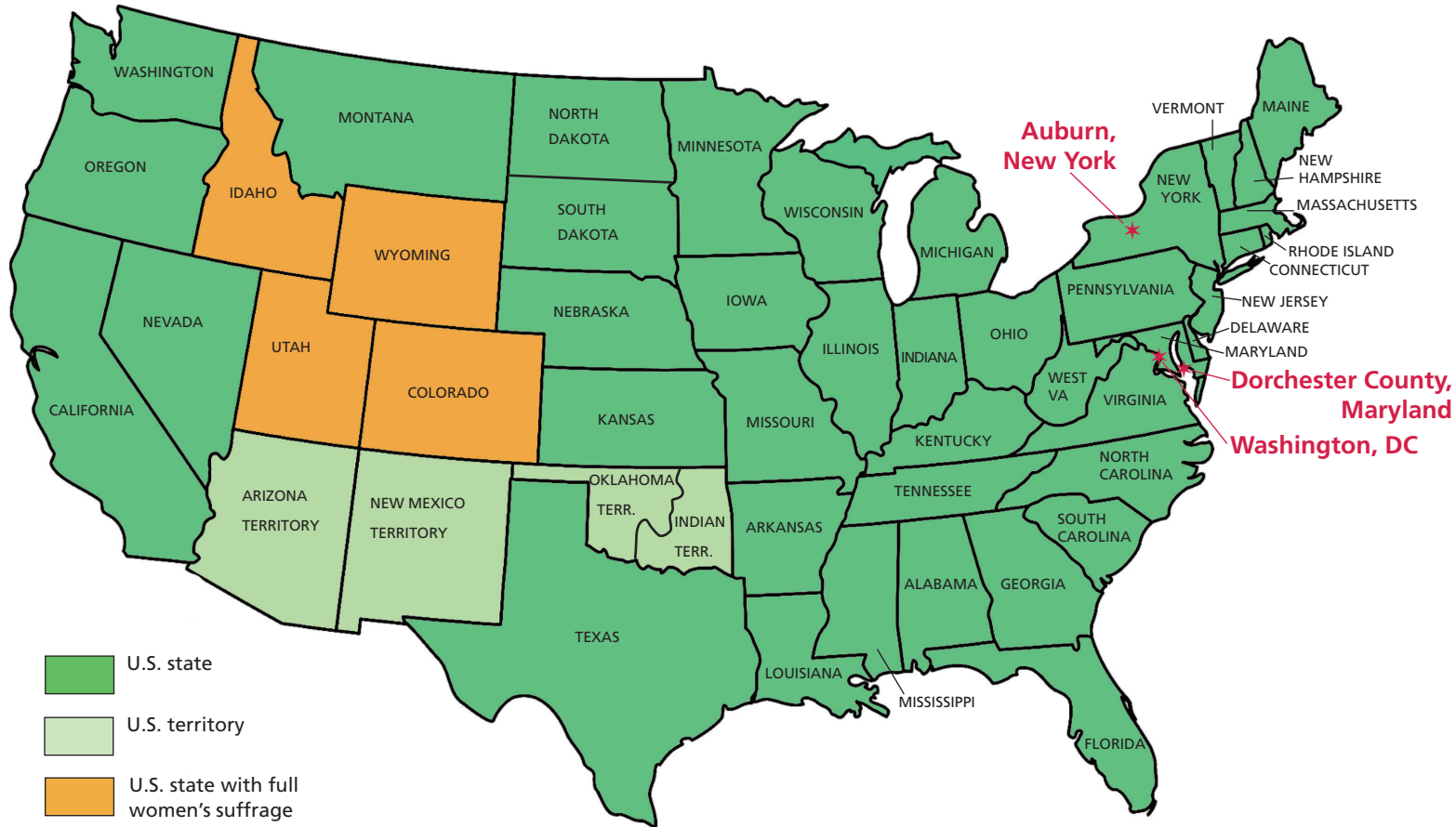
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<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/womenshistory/magicsashep5.htm>

FIND THE LOCATION

The United States in 1896—Washington, DC;

Dorchester County, Maryland; Auburn, New York



This map shows the United States in 1896, the year of the first International Convention of the National Federation of Afro-American Women. Study the map and complete the following activities:

- Find the star locating Dorchester County, Maryland, the county where Harriet Tubman was born. Look back at the map from Episode 1 and determine if Maryland was a slave state or a free state before 1850.

- Find the star locating Auburn, New York, the city where Harriet Tubman purchased land in 1859 where she could build a home for herself and her family. Compare the location of the city of Auburn with Seneca Falls and Rochester, New York from the maps in Episode 1 and Episode 3. Why do you think Harriet Tubman chose this area to live? What other suffragists and anti-slavery activists lived in the area?
- Find the star locating Washington, DC. This is the city where Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, and other prominent African American women met in 1896 to form the National Association of Colored Women, an organization that supported voting rights for African American women.
- Count the number of states on the map. _____
- Count the number of territories on the map. _____
- How many states allow women to vote? _____

BACKGROUND HISTORY



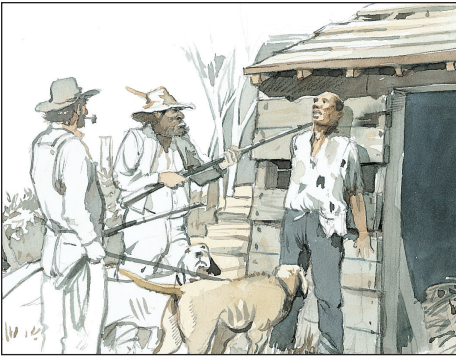
Harriet Tubman, 1868

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Harriet Tubman is best remembered for her work helping enslaved people escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad network. She risked her own safety by assisting at least 70 people out of slavery. She also is remembered for her work as an abolitionist, a Civil War nurse and spy, and as an activist for voting rights for women of color.

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland, sometime around 1820–25. Like most enslaved people at that time, Harriet didn't know her actual birth date. Harriet was one of nine children born to Harriet Green and Ben Ross. Although married, Harriet and Ben were enslaved by different plantation owners. Her parents named her Araminta, she would later rename herself Harriet in honor of her mother. Some of her siblings were sold away from the family and she never saw them again.

As a child, Harriet was forced to work caring for her younger siblings and was hired out to other households to work caring for babies and other chores. If the baby Harriet cared for woke up crying, Harriet was beaten. As a teenager, Harriet was struck in the head by a heavy metal object thrown by an overseer at another enslaved person who was trying to run away. The injury caused headaches and seizures for the rest of her life.



Enslaved people who escaped could legally be captured and returned.

NPS / RICHARD SCHLECHT

Around 1844, she married a free African American man named John Tubman even though she was still enslaved. It was soon after her marriage to Tubman that she changed her name from Araminta to Harriet. She soon began planning her escape from slavery. In 1849, Harriet made two escape attempts. The first escape she made with two of her brothers. When the brothers changed their minds about leaving their families, Harriet was forced to return with them. Her second escape she made alone, traveling by night through the woods and swamps and hiding during the days. She was assisted by “conductors” along the Underground Railroad, who provided hiding places and helped her to the next place of safety along her journey.

She eventually reached Pennsylvania and freedom, but she had left her husband and family back in Maryland. Over the next 10 years, she would return to Maryland 13 times to assist her friends and family in escaping slavery. She and her family settled in St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada, where they were safe from capture and being returned to slavery in the United States.

Harriet returned to the U.S. in 1859 to escape the cold winters in Canada. She bought land in Auburn, New York, as a home for herself and her family. The area was home to many abolitionists and suffragists and Harriet soon became friends with them. She supported herself and her parents by making speeches against slavery in cities like Boston and New York. She supported the Union during the Civil War by serving as a nurse, cook, scout, and spy in South Carolina. She even helped organize a raid against a Confederate army outpost that helped free 700 enslaved people.



Nannie Burroughs and other African American suffragists, early 1900s

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

After the war, Harriet returned to Auburn and continued her work to help newly freed African Americans. She built a home for poor elderly African Americans on her property so they could be safe and cared for. Harriet also became active in the suffrage movement for women—especially for African American women since some of the women’s suffrage groups did not allow women of color to participate. Harriet spoke at the first meeting of the National Federation of Afro-American Women in Washington, DC, in 1896. She was also a founder of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, which supported voting rights for African American women.

Harriet Tubman died in 1913 surrounded by family and friends at her home in Auburn.

THINK ABOUT IT

Think about the difficulties Harriet Tubman overcame in her lifetime. How might her life experiences shape the way she thought about equality for women and African Americans? What do you think she meant when she said, “the intention of the National Association of Colored Women is to furnish evidence of the moral, mental and material progress made by people of color through the efforts of our women” in her speech at the International Convention of the National Federation of Afro-American Women in 1896?

ACTIVITY

Create a \$20 Bill Design with Harriet Tubman’s Portrait

In 2016 a proposal was made by the Secretary of the Treasury to put a woman’s portrait on the \$20 bill. About 15 women were considered, but Harriet Tubman was selected for the new design. Susan B. Anthony and Alice Paul have been honored for their work as suffragists on U.S. coins. But so far only two women, Martha Washington and Sacagawea, have been featured on U.S. paper money. Both of those bills were printed over 100 years ago. The final design for the Harriet Tubman \$20 bill has not yet been authorized.

Create your own design for a Harriet Tubman \$20 bill. Your design doesn’t have to look like other current U.S. bills. Be creative! Design both the front and back of the bill.

When you have completed your design, write a short paragraph to explain your design choices. Some points to consider:

- What about Harriet Tubman makes her a good choice as a U.S. currency portrait?
- What symbols or images will you use to depict her life, personality, or important things she accomplished?
- What words will you use on your bill? Will you use Harriet Tubman’s own words? Will you use words that describe her?
- What images or words will you use on the back of the bill?



IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

What do the symbols on U.S. currency mean? Find out in this article prepared by the Federal Reserve:

<https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/publications/economic-education/symbols-on-american-money.pdf>

PLACES



Harriet Tubman's house in Auburn, NY

[Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, Auburn, NY](https://www.nps.gov/hart/index.htm)

<https://www.nps.gov/hart/index.htm>

[Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park](https://www.nps.gov/hatu/index.htm)

[Dorchester County, MD](https://www.nps.gov/hatu/index.htm)

<https://www.nps.gov/hatu/index.htm>



Stewarts Canal at Harriet Tubman
Underground Railroad National Historical
Park, Dorchester County, Maryland.

